

# Abolition Role Play Activity

You are Elizabeth Heyrick, a Quaker from Leicester, who started a women's anti-slavery society in your area. You complain that the male anti-slavery leaders are moving too slowly. In 1824 you wrote a pamphlet saying slavery should be abolished immediately, not gradually as the anti-slavery campaigners wanted. In 1830, under pressure from the women's societies, the men changed their minds, and in 1833 slavery was abolished across the British Empire! Unfortunately you did not live to see it as you died in 1831.



The class needs to be divided into 5 groups with about the same number of pupils in each group. Each group takes on one of the roles in each of five areas: Women Campaigners, Slave Resistance, Religious Groups, Individual campaigners, Former Slaves. They should look at the evidence and prepare a scene about their part in the abolition of slavery. Groups then present their scene and watch the other groups present theirs.

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## Key Factors in the Abolition of Slavery

This is a role play and Jigsaw activity which examines some of the key groups and individuals involved in the abolition of the slave trade. The information for this activity was drawn from the work done by St John's College, Cambridge University, on "Slave Trade Abolition in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk". The aim of this project was to tell the whole story of the abolition of the slave trade, focusing on two East Anglian campaigners, Thomas Clarkson and Olaudah Equiano, a former slave. It also gives a voice to those often forgotten today; the enslaved people themselves, women and religious groups of the time. For further information and resources, go to <http://www.slavetradeabolition.org/> .

Thanks to Jane Bosworth whose Cotton Mill activity gave me inspiration for this activity.

Developed by Anna Tomlinson at Kesgrave School in Ipswich.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/abolitionroleplay.pdf>

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### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

We support a network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to promote inclusive education. We develop and disseminate accessible talk-for-learning activities in all subject areas and for all ages.

17, Barford Street, Islington, London N1 0QB UK Phone: 0044 (0)20 7226 8885

Website: <http://www.collaborativelearning.org>

### BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies that promote talk across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We want to encourage you to change them and adapt them to your classroom and students. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project posts online many activities in all subject areas. An online newsletter is also updated regularly.

\*These activities are influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in non selective classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening . They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening.

\*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

\*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in pupils' first languages and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

\*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

\*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

\*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work more effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/abolitionroleplay.pdf>

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## Teacher Instructions.

The class needs to be divided into 5 groups with about the same number of pupils in each group. Each group takes on one of the roles in each of five areas: Women Campaigners, Slave Resistance, Religious Groups, Individual campaigners, Former Slaves. They should look at the evidence and prepare a scene about their part in the abolition of slavery. Groups then present their scene and watch the other groups present theirs.

Then they jigsaw; i.e. they form new groups which contain one person from each role group. You could number each group on the cards e.g. slave resistance 1, women 1, former slaves 1, etc. to make it easier to form groups; alternatively print cards on different colours. Each person should question the other characters and collect information about them on the proforma. During the plenary there can be a summary of the answers collected.

You may wish to add pictures or illustrations to enhance the character cards: useful websites include the following: E2BN Abolition Project; Slave Trade Abolition in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk; Also BBC History: The Abolition of the Slave Trade-unsung heroes.

<http://abolition.e2bn.org/index.php>

[http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/admissions/outreach\\_access/stacs/](http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/admissions/outreach_access/stacs/)

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/abolitionists\\_gallery.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/abolitionists_gallery.shtml)

# Women: Elizabeth Heyrick

Look at the information below to help you with your role.

Women played an important part in keeping the anti-slavery movement alive in the 1790's and the 1820's, even though they were not allowed to vote.

In the 1820's there were more than 70 women's anti-slavery societies.

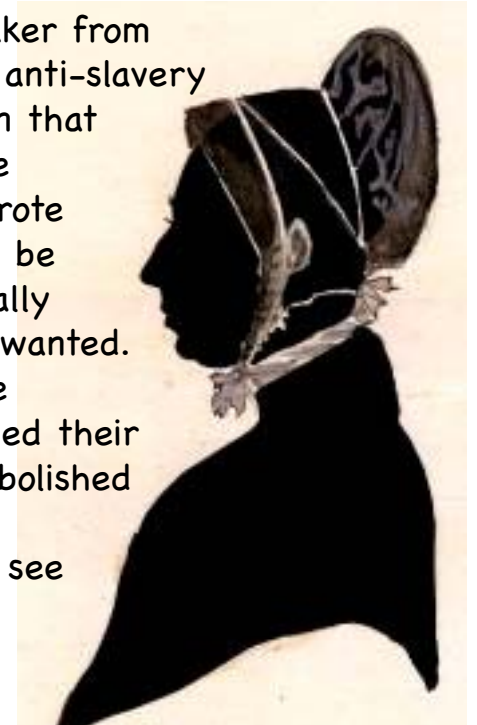
Women visited people in their homes to persuade them to support the cause.

They paid for campaigners like Thomas Clarkson and Olaudah Equiano to come and give public lectures attacking slavery.

In the 1790's, and again in the 1820's, women refused to buy sugar grown on plantations using slave labour. More than 300,000 people joined the boycott. They also refused to buy bread from bakers who used slave grown sugar.

They wore jewellery decorated with the image of a chained black slave to show their support for the campaign.

You are Elizabeth Heyrick, a Quaker from Leicester, who started a women's anti-slavery society in your area. You complain that the male anti-slavery leaders are moving too slowly. In 1824 you wrote a pamphlet saying slavery should be abolished immediately, not gradually as the anti-slavery campaigners wanted. In 1830, under pressure from the women's societies, the men changed their minds, and in 1833 slavery was abolished across the British Empire! Unfortunately you did not live to see it as you died in 1831.



**Former slaves such as Mary Prince and Phyllis Wheatley had their poems and autobiographies published. These were widely read and had a great influence on the British public.**

**Quakers were a religious group who believed that everyone was created equal, so no one should own another person. Many Quakers were anti-slavery campaigners.**

# Slave Resistance: Samuel Sharpe

You are Samuel Sharpe, a well respected churchman in charge of a missionary chapel in Montego Bay, Jamaica. You preach against slavery, saying that "no man can serve two masters."

In 1831 you lead a group of 2000 rebel slaves in the largest uprising seen in Jamaica. The rebels burn down houses and warehouses full of sugar cane. You take control of large areas of land.

It takes the whole of January for the troops to gain control.

Over 200 Africans are killed in the fighting, and hundreds more are captured and executed or brutally punished.

This revolt had a huge impact on the anti-slavery campaign. The British government were shocked, and decided it was too expensive and dangerous to keep slaves on the plantations any longer.

Just one week after Sharpe's death the government started to consider ways of ending slavery.

Look at the information below to help you with your role:

Africans resisted slavery in many ways:

- Free Africans attacked slave ships from the shore.
- We know of 392 slave revolts on board over 10% of slave ships.
- On the plantations, slaves pretended to be ill, broke tools and caused fires.
- Whenever possible slaves escaped to South America, England or North America.
- Escaped slaves fought back, attacking plantations, hiding in the hills and dense forests.
- Escaped slaves were often recaptured and were punished or horribly executed, for example being burned alive or starved to death. Despite this the revolts continued.
- Between 1789 and 1815 there were on average two slave revolts every year in the Caribbean.
- The largest slave revolt in the Caribbean in 1791 lasted for 13 years: slavery was abolished on that island and a new republic was formed called Haiti.

Sharpe was captured by British troops and executed in public. Just before he died he said;

*"I would rather die upon yonder gallows than live in slavery."*



# Key Individuals: Thomas Clarkson.

Look at the information below to help you with your role

Clarkson was horrified at what he found when he began to look into the slave trade:

*"It was but one gloomy subject from morning to night. In the daytime I was uneasy. In the night I had little rest. I sometimes never closed my eyelids for grief"*



Thomas Clarkson travelled around the country collecting evidence. Many of the ships he visited were full of cotton, tobacco, oils, spices, exotic woods, gold and ivory and beautiful fabrics, waiting to be traded in Britain. He collected examples of these in a big wooden box and took it to meetings all over the country. He showed that there were plenty of other things Africa could trade with us, instead of human beings.

Clarkson's work was very dangerous. Many people supported the slave trade and wanted to get rid of him. He had to meet witnesses in secret and in darkness.

When he was collecting evidence for a trial in Liverpool, he was told that he was 'now so hated that he would be torn to pieces and his lodgings burned down' if he continued!

He was attacked by a group of sailors who had been paid to kill him. They tried to throw him into the sea and they hit him to the ground, but he was able to escape.

You are Thomas Clarkson. You were born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, in 1760. You are over 6 feet tall with red hair.

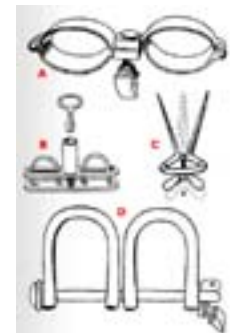
In 1786 you published an essay against slavery which changed your life. It was called 'Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their wills?' You decided to dedicate your whole life to abolishing the slave trade:

*"If the statement I had made were facts, it was high time that something should be done to put an end to such cruelties."*

In 1787 you founded the "Committee for Affecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade" with James Philips, Granville Sharp, and others. You met William Wilberforce and persuaded him to argue against slavery in Parliament. You spent many years collecting evidence about the slave trade;

You travelled around England for 7 years. You visited hundreds of slave ships and collected shackles and thumbscrews, information from sailors and also evidence of the skills of the African people. After 1807 you continued to campaign with others for the freedom of all slaves.

Thomas Clarkson died in 1846 in Playford, near Ipswich.



# Religious Groups: James Philips

Look at the information below to help you with your role.

Some of the first campaigners against slavery were members of the Christian group known as The Quakers.

They believed that slavery was sinful and against Christian teaching. They believed that all men were created equal, so no man should own another.

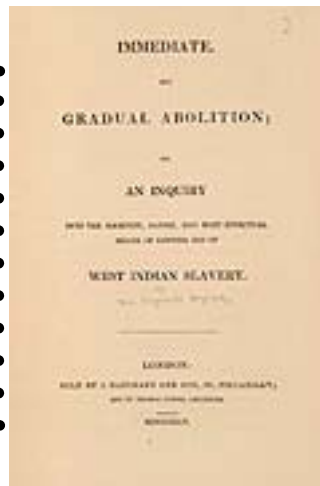
The Quakers helped more than anyone else to shape the slavery campaign. They were good at putting pressure on Parliament, placing articles in newspapers, publishing leaflets and sending in petitions. However they were unpopular in Britain because their religious views were different to most people; they needed the help of people like Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp, the sons of Anglican clergymen, to get their views heard.

You are James Philips, a bookseller, printer and a Quaker. In 1786 you met Thomas Clarkson. He was looking for someone to publish his essay on the slave trade. You offered to do this; you also introduced Clarkson to other Quakers who were already campaigning against slavery.

You and eight other Quakers joined with Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp to form "The Society for effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade" in 1787. This group united many different groups of people; Anglicans, Quakers, Methodists, women's groups and former slaves. The first meeting was held in your bookshop.

The Quakers had been campaigning against slavery for 150 years before it was finally abolished. As early as 1647, the founder of the Quakers, George Fox, wrote "To Friends beyond the sea, that have Blacks and Indian slaves" to remind them of Quaker belief in equality.

- • • • •
- Quaker businessmen and merchants
- donated a lot of money to fund the anti-slavery campaign.
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Anthony Benezet was a Quaker teacher and writer born in 1713, and one of the earliest abolitionists. It was his writing that inspired Thomas Clarkson to write the essay about slavery which changed his life completely. Benezet said;

*"To live in ease and plenty by the toil of those whom violence and cruelty have put in our power, is neither consistent with Christianity nor common justice..."*

## Former Slaves: Olaudah Equiano.

Look at the information below to help you with your role.

Many former slaves realised that the most powerful argument against slavery was their own life story. Many were taught to read and write English by their masters and wrote autobiographies which had a huge impact on the people who read them.



Unfortunately Olaudah Equiano never saw the end of slavery because he died in 1797, 10 years before the abolition act was passed.

This is an extract from Olaudah Equiano's autobiography, describing the conditions on the slave ships:

*"The air soon became unfit for breathing, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. This wretched situation was made worse by the chains. The shrieks of women, and the groaning of the dying, created a scene of horror almost unbelievable. Three desperate slaves tried to kill themselves by jumping overboard. Two drowned, the other was captured and beaten unmercifully. When I refused to eat, I too was beaten"*

MARY PRINCE was born in 1788 to a slave family in Bermuda. She suffered terrible treatment as a slave. She became the first woman to present an anti-slavery petition to the government. She was also the first black woman to publish her autobiography in 1831. She wrote about slaves like her who were still suffering through bad treatment and illness on the plantations in America, even though the slave trade had been abolished in Britain.



You are Olaudah Equiano, a former slave, taken from Africa aged 11 in 1756. One of your masters named you Gustavus Vassa. You learned to read and write, and bought your freedom for £40 in 1766. You became a sailor and travelled all over the world.

*"When I returned to England I worked with campaigners like Granville Sharp to help slaves who had escaped from their owners but had then been recaptured in England.*

*I wrote my autobiography in 1789, "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Gustavus Vassa". I travelled all over the country for five years, speaking at public meetings, with the help of friends such as Thomas Clarkson. Tens of thousands of people read my book or heard me speak, and I convinced many people to join the campaign for the abolition of slavery."*



What did this character do to help bring about the end of slavery? Who did they help? In your group ask the other characters questions to find out how this person and others like them influenced the abolition of the slave trade. Try to find three points for each person.

Elizabeth Heyrick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Samuel Sharpe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
James Philips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Olaudah Equiano	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Thomas Clarkson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>